DARK MOON RISING
BATMAN
and the MAD MONK
5
OF 6
FEB
2007
MATT WAGNER
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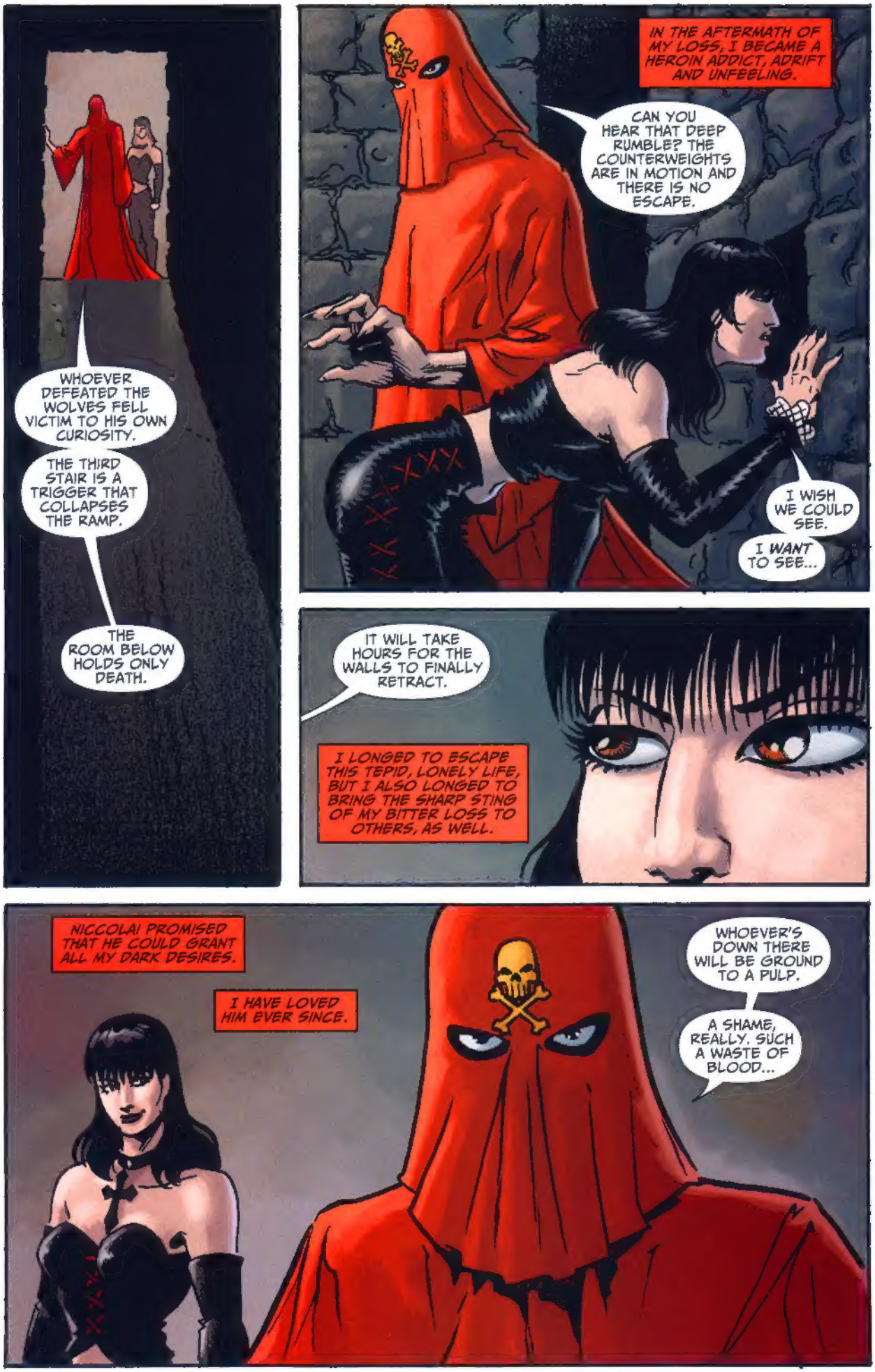
WHEN I FIRST MET NICCOLA! I HAD JUST LOST MY PARENTS TO THE WAR THAT HAS RAVAGED MY COUNTRY FOR YEARS.
IT'S TOO LATE.
THE SEALING STONE HAS DROPPED INTO PLACE. THE OBSERVATION MIRRORS ARE BLOCKED.
I SAW THEIR BODIES RIDDLED BY MACHINE-GUN FIRE. I SAW MY SISTER BURNED ALIVE, HER LOVELY, PALE SKIN BLACKENED TO A CRISP.

MATT WAGNER·STORY & ART

DAVE STEWART ·COLORS· • ROB LEIGH ·LETTERS· • WAGNER & STEWART ·COVER· • BRANDON MONTCLARE ·ASST. EDITOR· • BOB SCHRECK ·EDITOR· • BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE


WHOEVER DEFEATED THE WOLVES FELL VICTIM TO HIS OWN CURIOSITY.
THE THIRD STAIR IS A TRIGGER THAT COLLAPSES THE RAMP.
THE ROOM BELOW HOLDS ONLY DEATH.
IN THE AFTERMATH OF MY LOSS, I BECAME A HEROIN ADDICT, ADRIFT AND UNFEELING.
CAN YOU HEAR THAT DEEP RUMBLE? THE COUNTERWEIGHTS ARE IN MOTION AND THERE IS NO ESCAPE.
I WISH WE COULD SEE.
I WANT TO SEE...
IT WILL TAKE HOURS FOR THE WALLS TO FINALLY RETRACT.
I LONGED TO ESCAPE THIS TEPID, LONELY LIFE, BUT I ALSO LONGED TO BRING THE SHARP STING OF MY BITTER LOSS TO OTHERS, AS WELL.
NICCOLAI PROMISED THAT HE COULD GRANT ALL MY DARK DESIRES.
I HAVE LOVED HIM EVER SINCE.
WHOEVER'S DOWN THERE WILL BE GROUND TO A PULP.
A SHAME, REALLY. SUCH A WASTE OF BLOOD...

Drainage grate... stuck tight.
Small chance of getting lucky TWICE like that.
Spikes inching closer.
Any mechanism strong enough to move stone walls...
...will be all but unstoppable.
Need to slow them, at least.
Luckily, I didn't cast ALL the 'rangs in silver.

CHK--

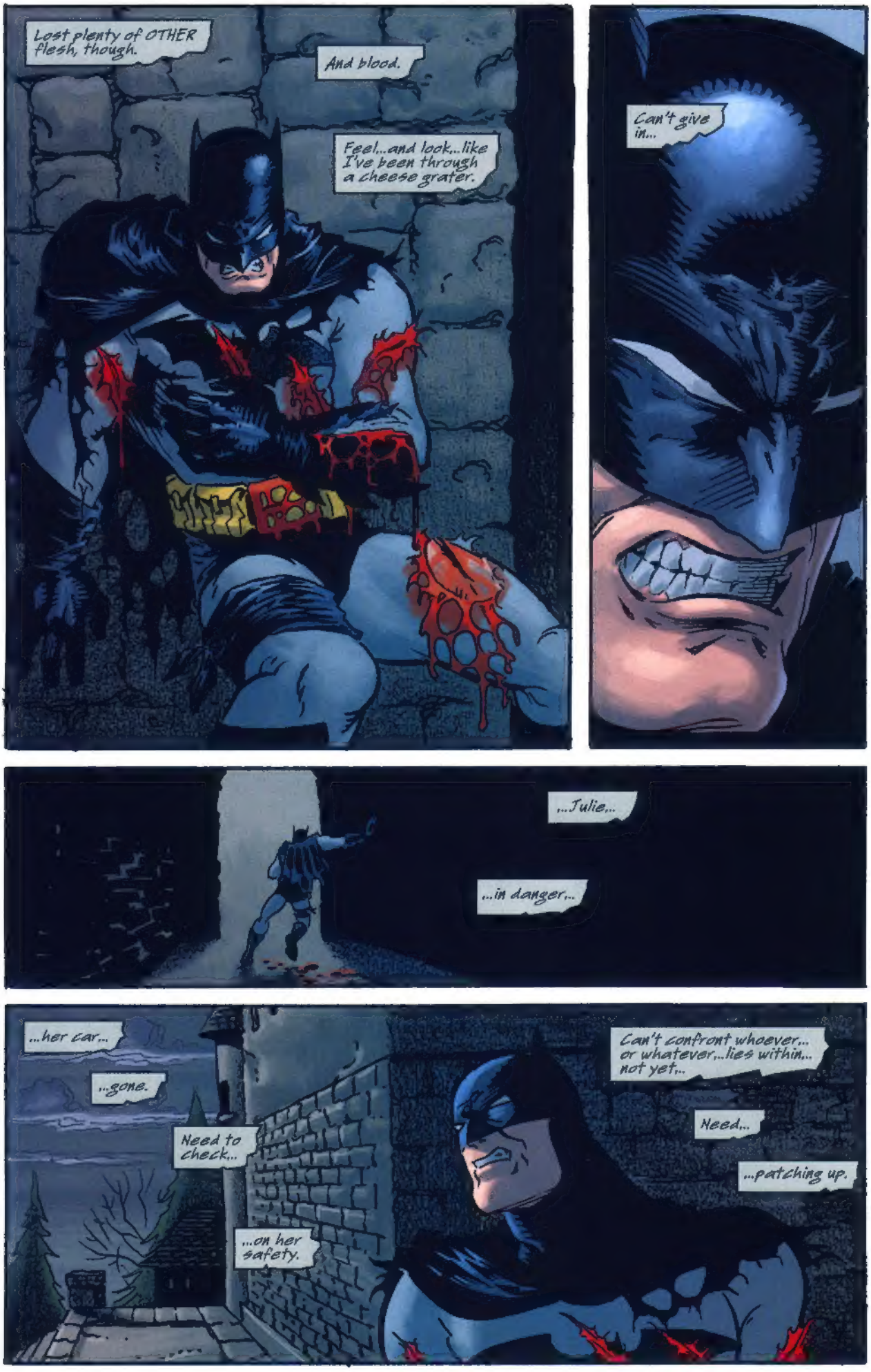
Buys me SOME time.
Stonecap, blocking the hole I fell through.
Too heavy.
Not enough leverage.
Need to blast it out.
The room is small for this amount of plastique.
The walls continue to grind.
SHHK
YAGGH!
SSSSSS
Have to take the chance.
Pray I don't blow my eardrums out.
SSSSSS

A-BOOM

Dizzy...
Concussion?
Ears...ringing...
...good sign...
...focus...
...walls...

...no time...
Go.
Go.
Go.
Go.

Lucky I didn't leave a leg down there...


Lost plenty of OTHER flesh, though.
And blood.
Feel...and look...like I've been through a cheese grater.
Can't give in...
...Julie...
...in danger...
...her car...
...gone.
Need to check...
...on her safety.
Can't confront whoever... or whatever...lies within... not yet...
Need...
...patching up.

He's never taken this long to respond.
Or perhaps I've just grown to expect too much.
I simply push that damn button and expect him to show.

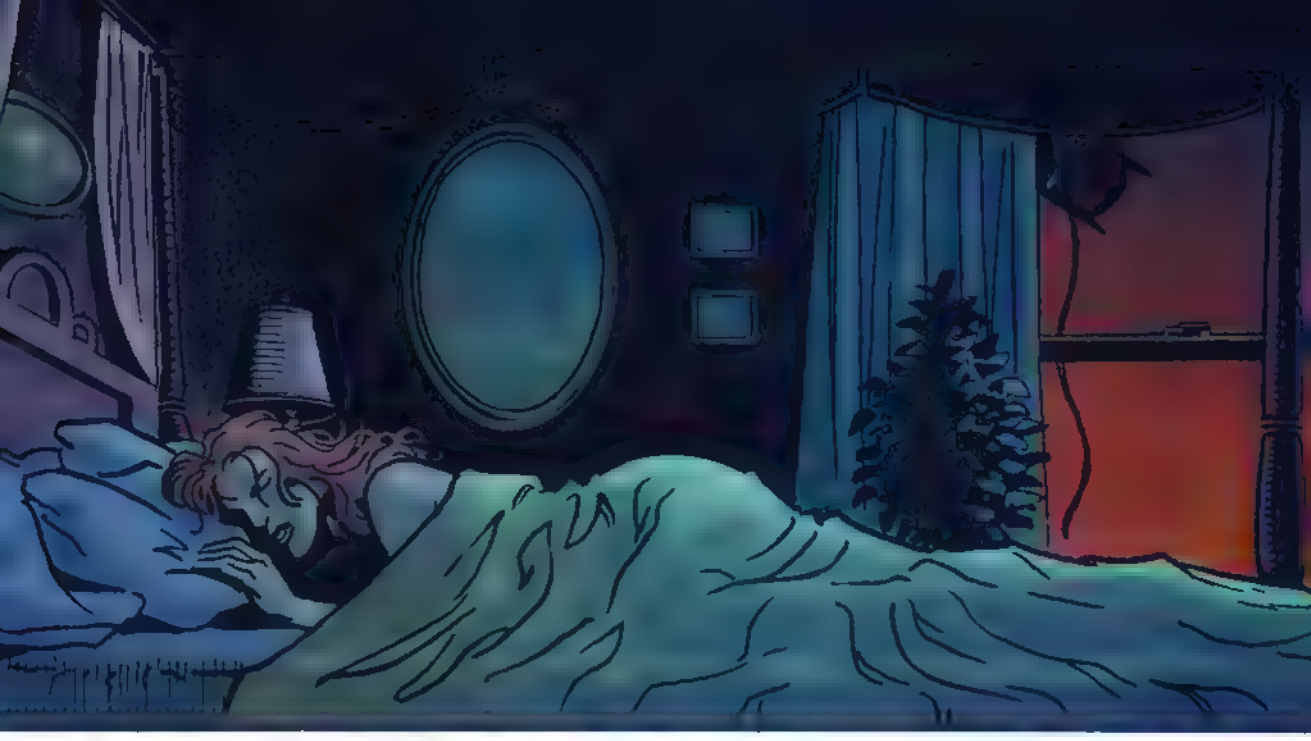
My dark and mysterious comrade.
OH! WAS BEGINNING TO THINK THAT YOU'D TAKEN THE NIGHT OFF.
CRIME NEVER RESTS, JIM.
YEAH, I SHOULD'VE KNOWN--
JIM... WHAT... WHAT IS IT?

GOOD LORD!!

Unh?
MY GOD, YOU'RE--ARE YOU... ARE YOU OKAY?!

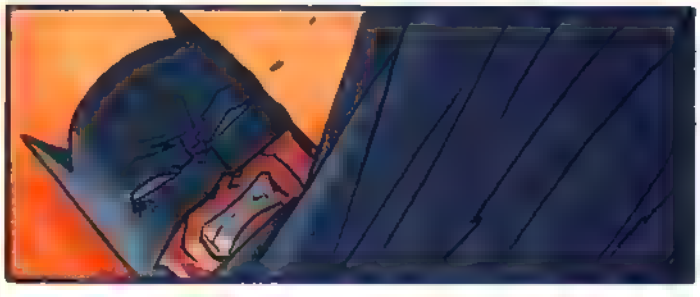
I'M... I'LL BE FINE.
LOOK, I DON'T HAVE *TIME* FOR THIS... WHY DID YOU SUMMON ME?
BECAUSE I CAN.
AND *THAT'S* PART OF THE PROBLEM.
LOOK, I HAVE NO REGRETS FOR BEING PART OF THIS... *CAMPAIGN* OF YOURS. WE BOTH WANT THE SAME RESULTS-- TO SEE *GOTHAM* CLEANED OF WHAT AILS IT.
IT'S JUST... OUR METHODS THAT DIFFER.
I'VE ALSO GOT NO ILLUSIONS THAT WHAT YOU DO IS VITALLY NECESSARY... *AND* EFFECTIVE. BUT I *CAN'T* SNEAK AROUND IN THE SHADOWS LIKE THIS ANYMORE.
THAT'S *YOUR* PATH..
NOT MINE.
IF I'M GOING TO CONTACT YOU IN THE FUTURE, IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO BE SOMETHING MORE ABOVEBOARD.
NOT SO COVERT.
DON'T ASK ME HOW, BECAUSE, AS OF YET, I HAVEN'T A CLUE.

I'M SORRY... I DON'T MEAN TO--
YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN. YOU HAVE A FAMILY TO CONSIDER. I UNDERSTAND.
ANY FURTHER NEWS ON OUR BLOODLESS MURDER VICTIMS?
NOT MUCH. WE DID FINALLY MANAGE TO I.D. THEM ALL VIA DENTAL RECORDS. AND, ISN'T *THAT* SOME KIND OF SICK IRONY?
ANYWAY, THEY HAD ONLY TWO THINGS IN COMMON AND IT'S NOT REALLY MUCH OF A CORRELATION.
FIRST, THEY WERE ALL OUT-OF-TOWNERS-- TRANSPLANTS TO THE CITY WHO HAD LEFT HOME FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS. I HAVE TO ASSUME THE KILLER CHOSE THEM ALL FOR THE LACK OF ANY LOCAL ASSOCIATION.
SECONDLY, AND I TEND TO THINK *THIS* IS MERE COINCIDENCE... THEY WERE *ALL* ONLY CHILDREN. NO SIBLINGS.
ONLY...?
YES. *WHY?* DO YOU THINK THAT'S SIGNIFIC--
Well...you all but ASKED for him to keep his distance.
Never really noticed the view from up here. Even after all this time.
Can really see quite far.



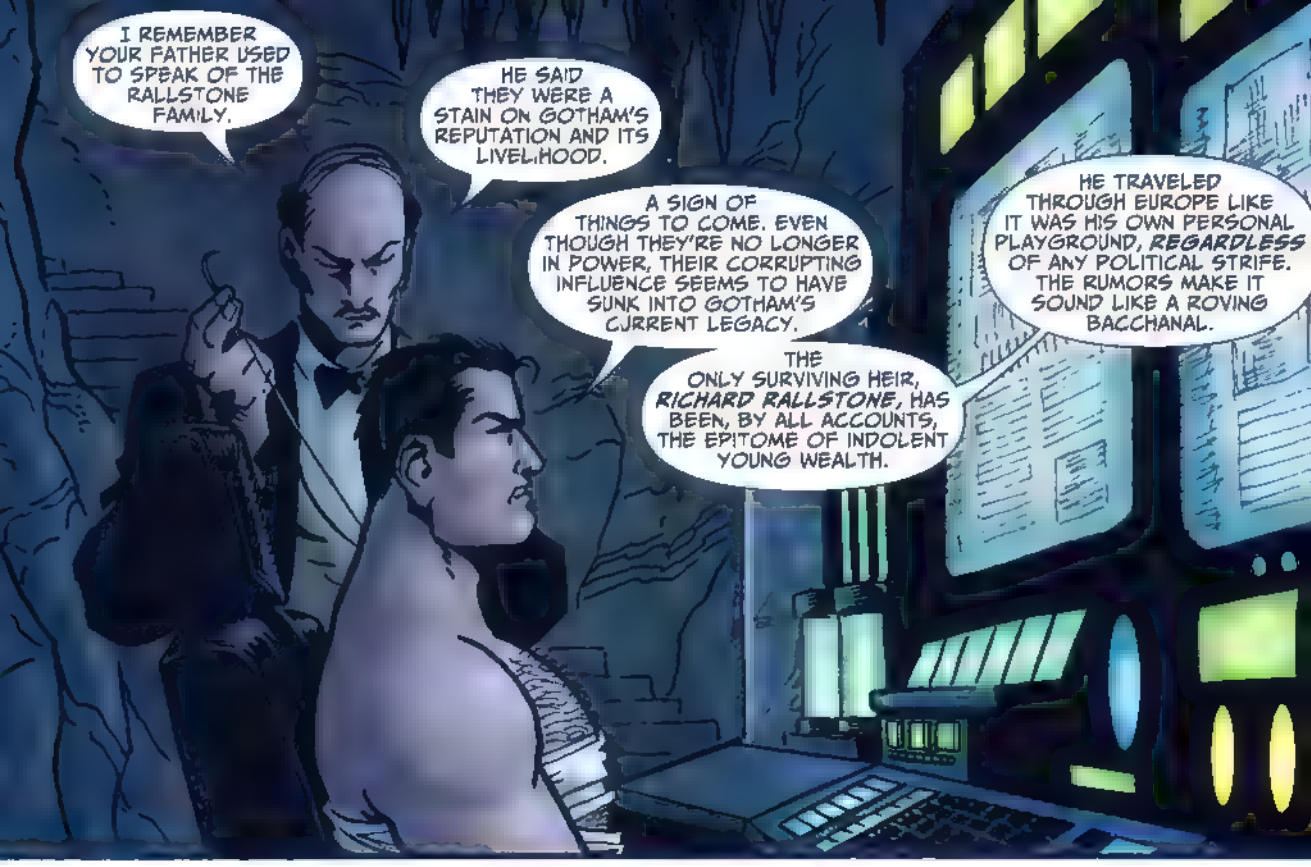
Thank God, she appears to be sleeping.
Peacefully.
Can't afford...
...go inside...
...wouldn't—

SLIPP



NGAHH!
THWAK

No good.
Wounds reopened.
Need..
...patching up...
Had to..
Had to.
...make sure...
She's okay.


I REMEMBER YOUR FATHER USED TO SPEAK OF THE RALLSTONE FAMILY.
HE SAID THEY WERE A STAIN ON GOTHAM'S REPUTATION AND ITS LIVELIHOOD.
A SIGN OF THINGS TO COME. EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NO LONGER IN POWER, THEIR CORRUPTING INFLUENCE SEEMS TO HAVE SUNK INTO GOTHAM'S CURRENT LEGACY.
THE ONLY SURVIVING HEIR, *RICHARD RALLSTONE*, HAS BEEN, BY ALL ACCOUNTS, THE EPITOME OF INDOLENT YOUNG WEALTH.
HE TRAVELED THROUGH EUROPE LIKE IT WAS HIS OWN PERSONAL PLAYGROUND, *REGARDLESS* OF ANY POLITICAL STRIFE. THE RUMORS MAKE IT SOUND LIKE A ROVING BACCHANAL.

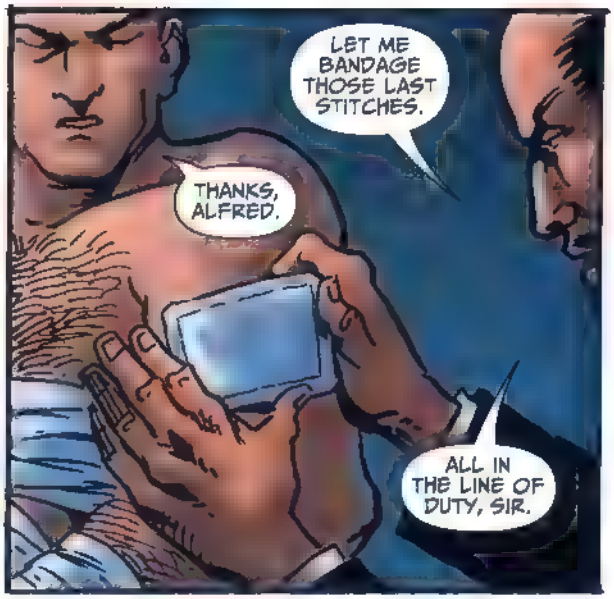
RALLSTONE SCION
HOME FROM ABROAD

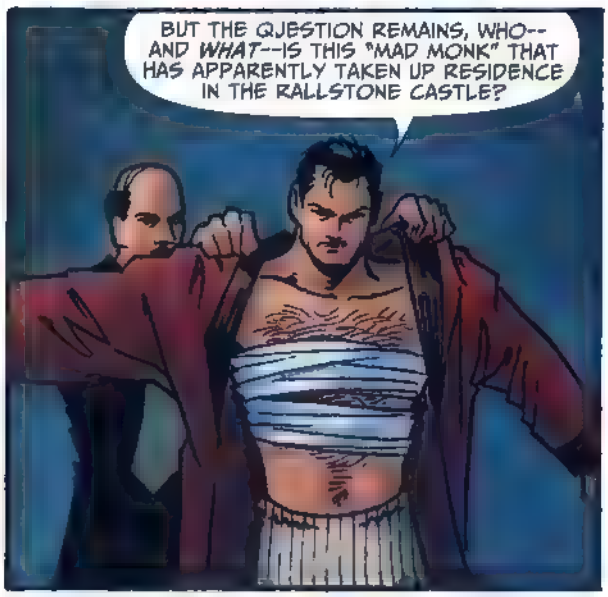
RALLSTONE CASTLE FALLS INTO DISREPAIR
FUTURE UNCERTAIN

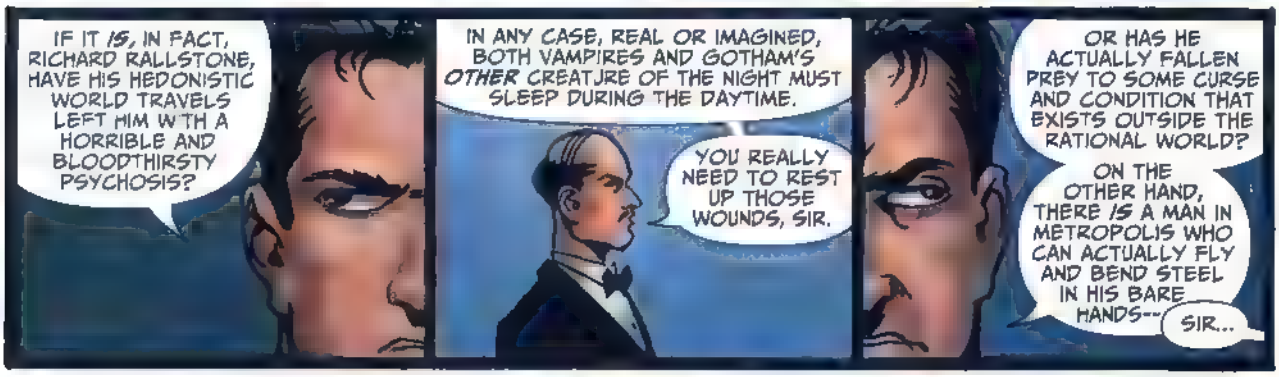
EVEN PUTS THE PUBLIC PERSONA OF BRUCE WAYNE TO SHAME.
HIS FATHER WAS THE LAST KNOWN RESIDENT OF THE "RALLSTONE CASTLE."

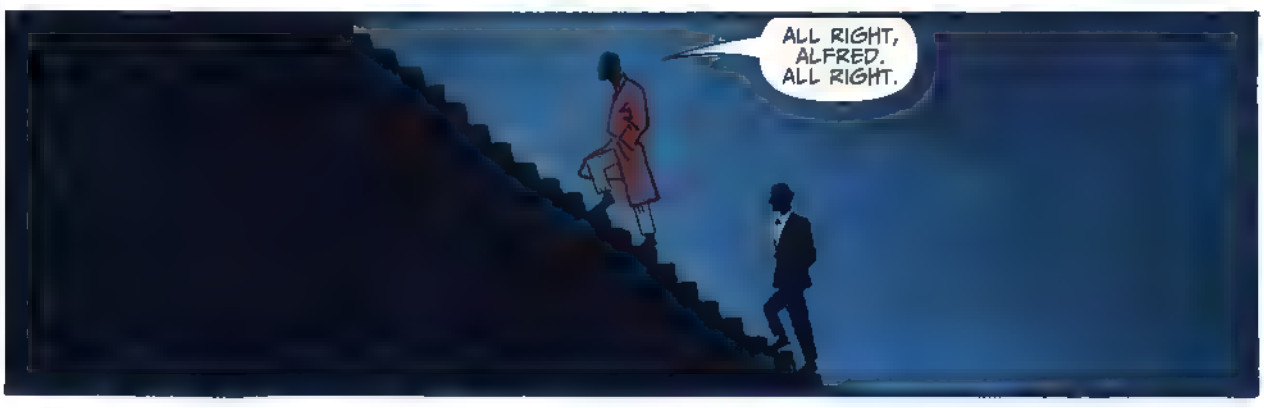
HE COMMITTED SUICIDE WHEN HE ULTIMATELY HAD TO DECLARE BANKRUPTCY.
THE CASTLE'S DEED IS *STILL* LISTED IN RICHARD RALLSTONE'S NAME--*OWWCH!*
EASY THERE, "DOC!"
IT'S NOT *MY* FAULT YOU CAN'T SEEM TO REMAIN UNINJURED FOR MORE THAN A FEW DAYS AT A TIME.

NOW THEN, IS THAT ALL? NO OTHER LACERATIONS, LESIONS, CONTUSIONS OR ABRASIONS THAT NEED TENDING TO?
NO, NO... THAT'S FINE. I THINK YOU GOT THEM ALL. BESIDES, I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD *STAND* ANY MORE OF THE *TREATMENTS!*
OHH... DON'T BE SUCH A BABY! HERE...

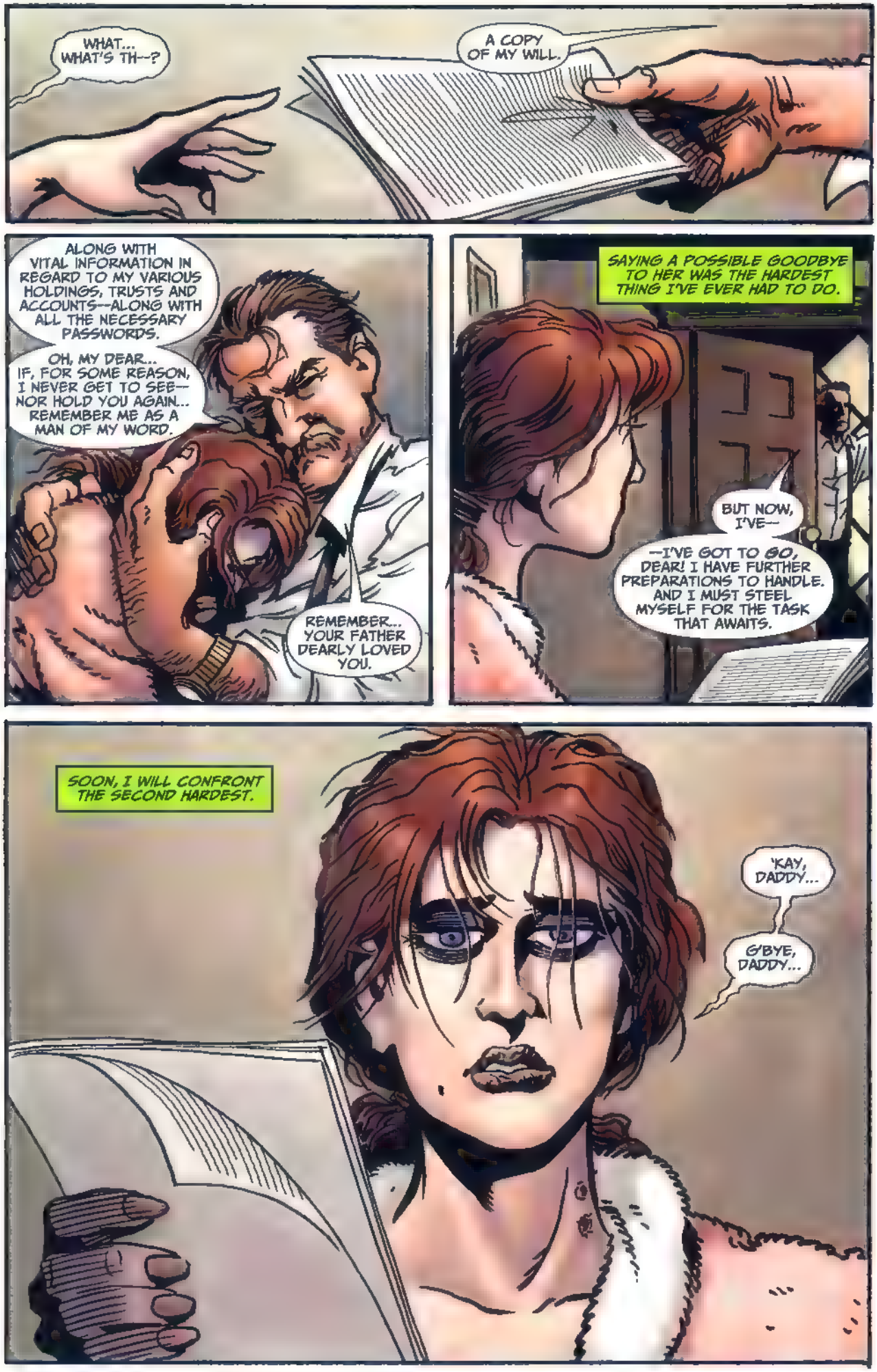

LET ME BANDAGE THOSE LAST STITCHES.
THANKS, ALFRED.
ALL IN THE LINE OF DUTY, SIR.


BUT THE QJESTION REMAINS, WHO-- AND *WHAT*--IS THIS "MAD MONK" THAT HAS APPARENTLY TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN THE RALLSTONE CASTLE?

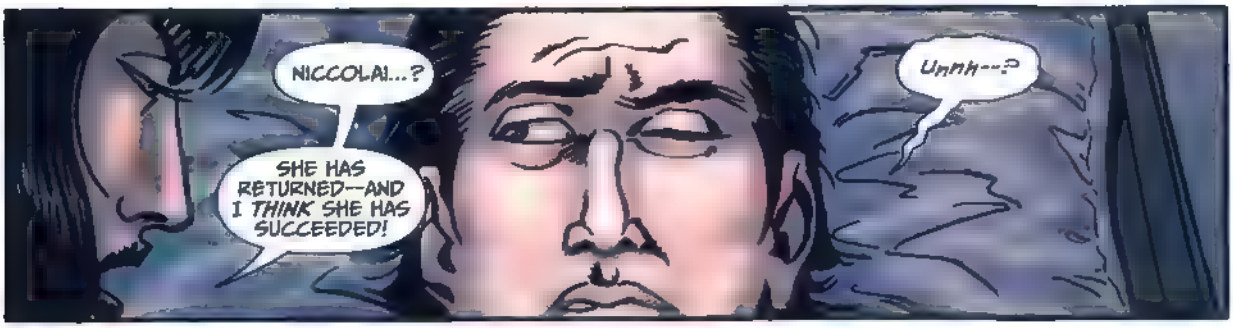

IF IT *IS*, IN FACT, RICHARD RALLSTONE, HAVE HIS HEDONISTIC WORLD TRAVELS LEFT HIM WITH A HORRIBLE AND BLOODTHIRSTY PSYCHOSIS?
IN ANY CASE, REAL OR IMAGINED, BOTH VAMPIRES AND GOTHAM'S *OTHER* CREATJRE OF THE NIGHT MUST SLEEP DURING THE DAYTIME.
YOU REALLY NEED TO REST UP THOSE WOUNDS, SIR.
OR HAS HE ACTUALLY FALLEN PREY TO SOME CURSE AND CONDITION THAT EXISTS OUTSIDE THE RATIONAL WORLD?
ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE *IS* A MAN IN METROPOLIS WHO CAN ACTUALLY FLY AND BEND STEEL IN HIS BARE HANDS--
SIR...


ALL RIGHT, ALFRED. ALL RIGHT.

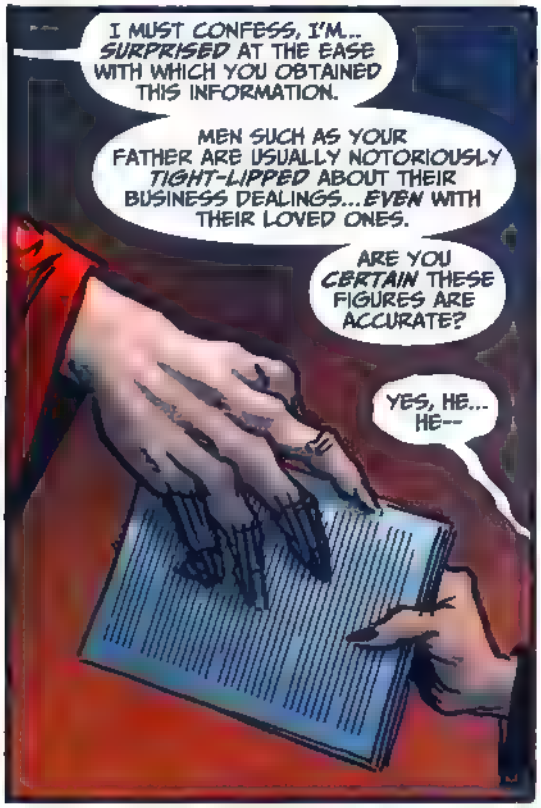
D-D-DADDY...?
ARE Y-- ARE YOU H-HERE? DADDY, I--
CAN'T BELIEVE I SLEPT SO... SO LONG--
I HAVE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS A MAN WHO FACES UP TO HIS RESPONSIBILITIES.
NO MATTER HOW DISTASTEFUL THE CONSEQUENCES.
I'M...I'M IN HERE, DARLING. I'M...I'M GLAD YOU'RE FINALLY AWAKE.
I HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS WITH YOU. SOMETHING THAT'S VITALLY IMPORTANT!
I'M J-JUST SO... SO COLD! SO COLD...
...STILL TIRED...
...AND IT'S SOOOO BRIGHT! CAN'T WE...CAN'T WE DRAW THE SHADES?
DARLING...
...I KNOW I...I HAVEN'T BEEN AS HONEST WITH YOU AS I SHOULD HAVE BEEN, LATELY.
YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND, THIS ISN'T EASY FOR ME.
LORD KNOWS, I'VE BEEN ASHAMED OF WHAT I DID BUT, NOW... NOW I FIND MYSELF---
.OH, GOD.
--FORCED INTO ACTIONS THAT MIGHT...MIGHT ULTIMATELY PROVE DISASTROUS.
DADDY, I DON'T...
...WHA-- WHAT ARE YOU TALKING AB--
YOU KNOW I AM A MAN OF PRINCIPLE...AND OF COMPROMISE. BUT THIS SITUATION HAS PROVEN UNYIELDING. AND IT DEMANDS AN END!
HERE...

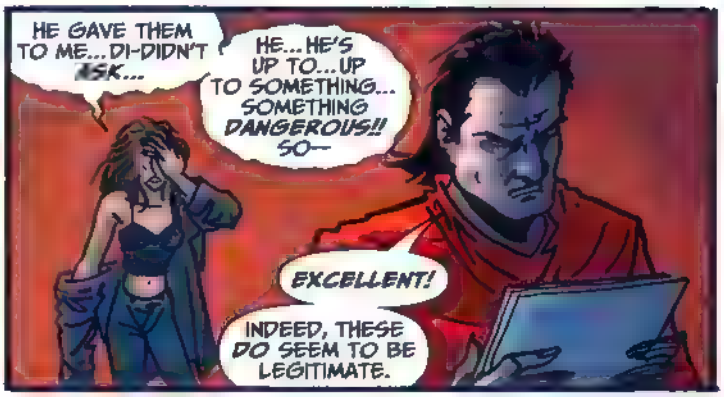

WHAT... WHAT'S TH--?
A COPY OF MY WILL.
ALONG WITH VITAL INFORMATION IN REGARD TO MY VARIOUS HOLDINGS, TRUSTS AND ACCOUNTS--ALONG WITH ALL THE NECESSARY PASSWORDS.
OH, MY DEAR... IF, FOR SOME REASON, I NEVER GET TO SEE--NOR HOLD YOU AGAIN... REMEMBER ME AS A MAN OF MY WORD.
REMEMBER... YOUR FATHER DEARLY LOVED YOU.
SAYING A POSSIBLE GOODBYE TO HER WAS THE HARDEST THING I'VE EVER HAD TO DO.
BUT NOW, I'VE--
--I'VE GOT TO GO, DEAR! I HAVE FURTHER PREPARATIONS TO HANDLE. AND I MUST STEEL MYSELF FOR THE TASK THAT AWAITS.
SOON, I WILL CONFRONT THE SECOND HARDEST.
'KAY, DADDY...
G'BYE, DADDY...

AT FIRST, I FOUND IT VERY DIFFICULT, LEARNING TO SLEEP INSIDE OF A COFFIN.
THE MEMORY OF MY PERSONAL TRAGEDIES WAS STILL TOO FRESH IN MY MIND. BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I HAD TASTED THE ELIXIR OF LIFE; FELT THE HEADY RUSH OF SOMEONE [redacted].
NOW, I SLEEP LIKE A BABY
CREEEEK--
NICCOLAI, THOUGH... [redacted] LIKE [redacted]

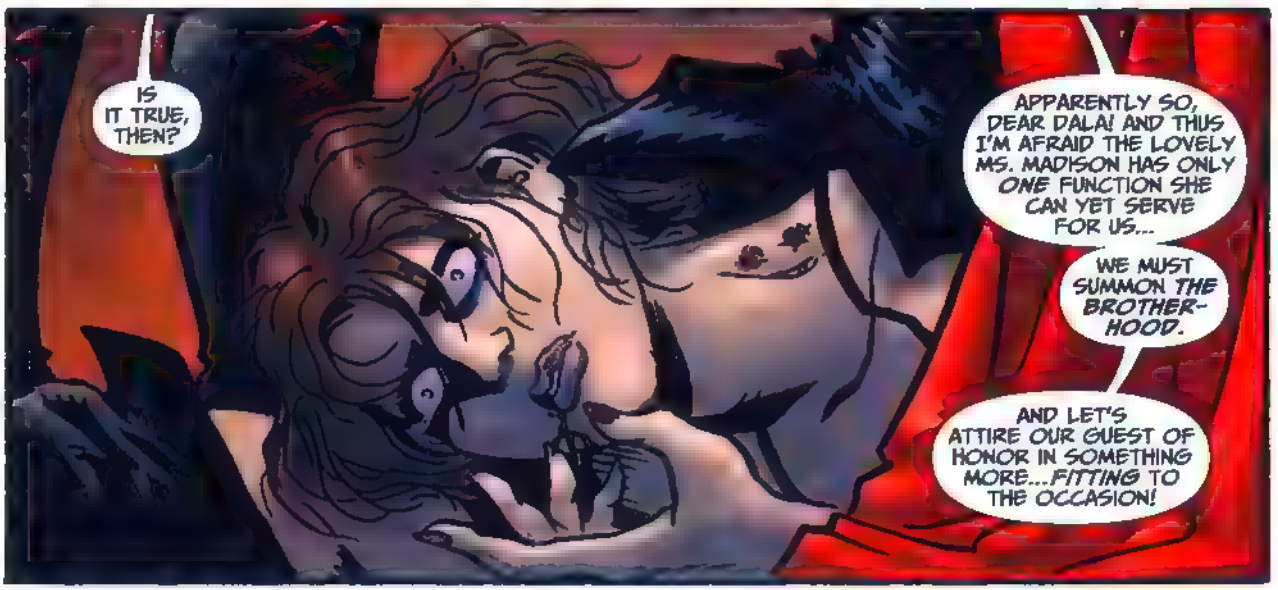

NICCOLAI...?
SHE HAS RETURNED--AND I THINK SHE HAS SUCCEEDED!
Unnh--?

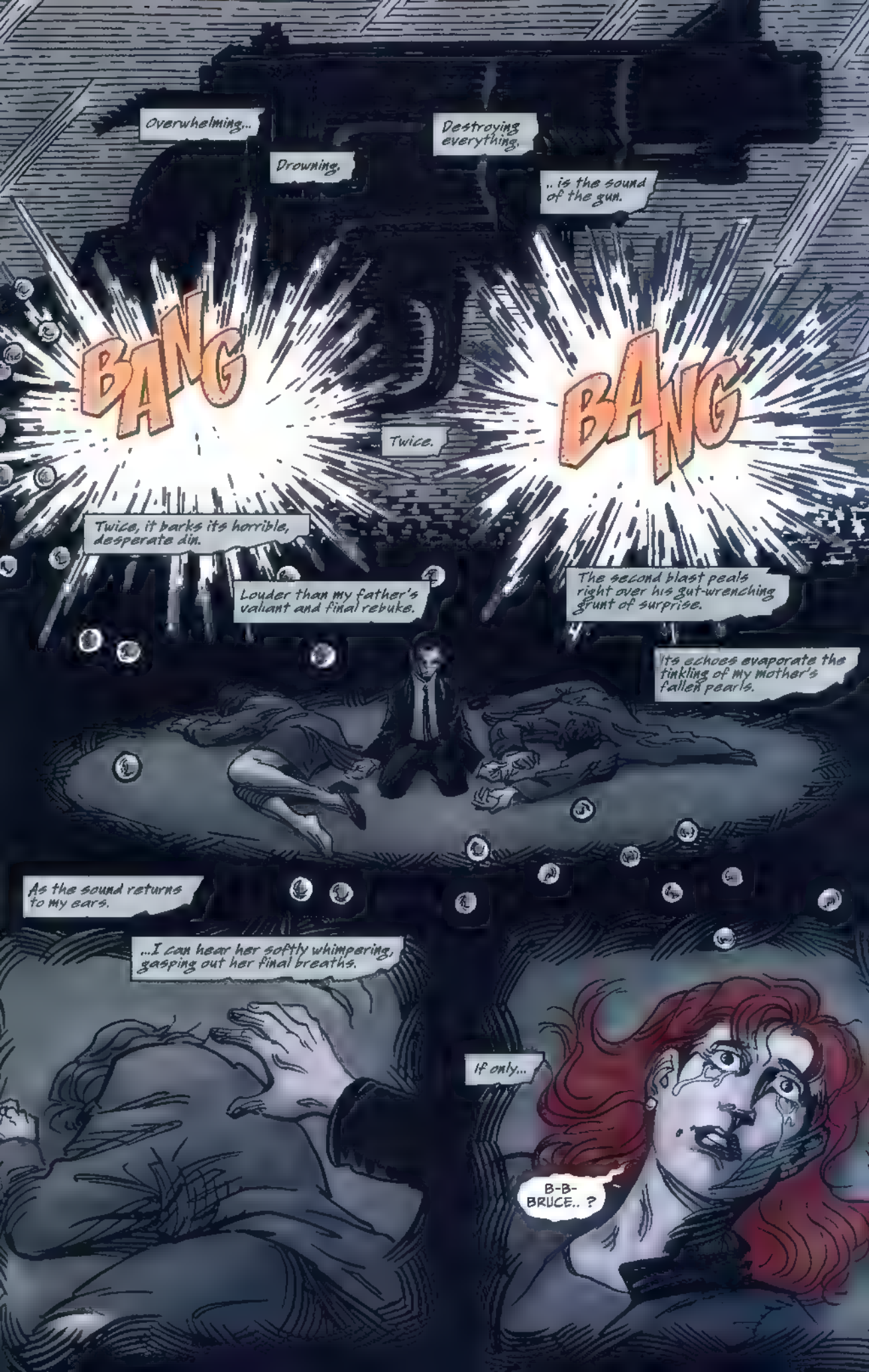
SOOOO... MS. MADISON--
WHAT BRINGS YOU ALL THE WAY OUT HERE AGAIN SO SOON? IS YOUR FATHER... STILL *WELL?*
HE... HE GAVE ME... GAVE ME...
WHAT YOU... WHAT YOU WANTED...
GAVE ME...
STEADY, WENCH.

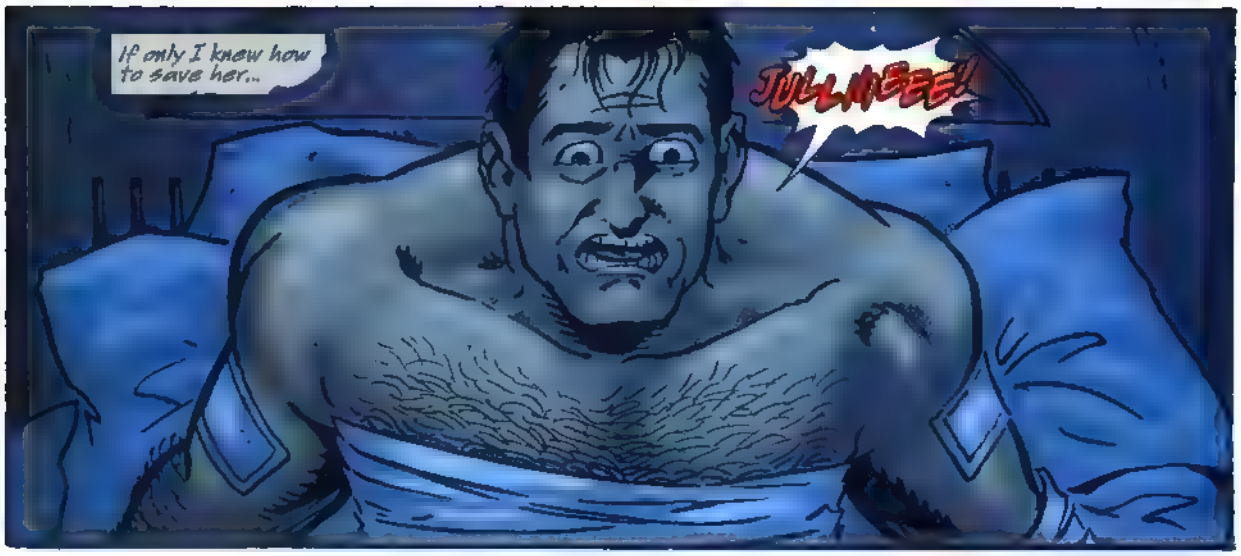

I MUST CONFESS, I'M... *SURPRISED* AT THE EASE WITH WHICH YOU OBTAINED THIS INFORMATION.
MEN SUCH AS YOUR FATHER ARE USUALLY NOTORIOUSLY *TIGHT-LIPPED* ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS DEALINGS... *EVEN* WITH THEIR LOVED ONES.
ARE YOU *CERTAIN* THESE FIGURES ARE ACCURATE?
YES, HE... HE--

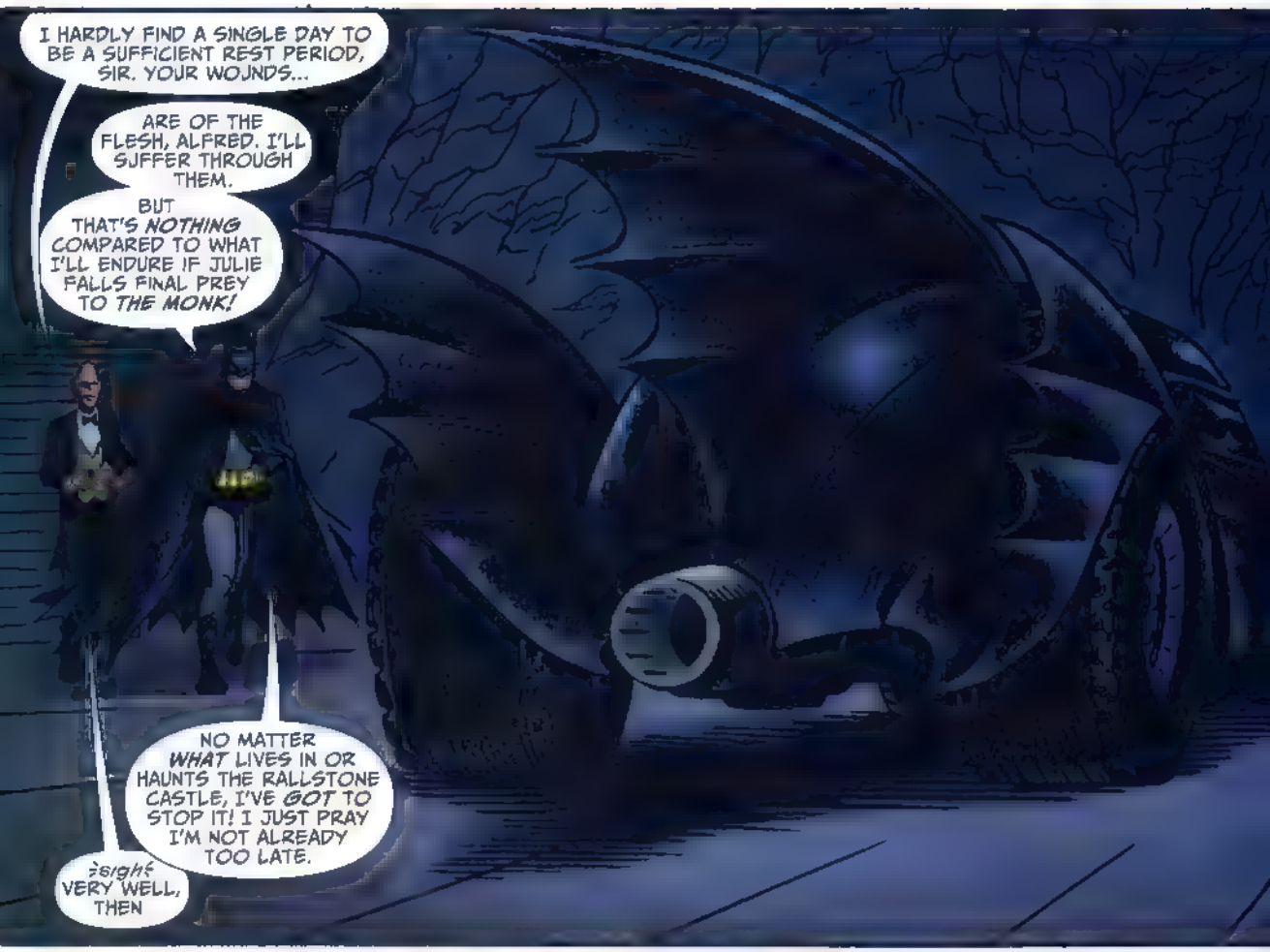

HE GAVE THEM TO ME... DI-DIDN'T *ASK*...
HE... HE'S UP TO... UP TO SOMETHING... SOMETHING *DANGEROUS!!* SO--
EXCELLENT!
INDEED, THESE *DO* SEEM TO BE LEGITIMATE.

SO... *WORRIED!*
WORRIED ABOU--
SNAP
ENOUGH OUT OF YOU, THEN!
UNNnhh--


IS IT TRUE, THEN?
APPARENTLY SO, DEAR DALA! AND THUS I'M AFRAID THE LOVELY MS. MADISON HAS ONLY *ONE* FUNCTION SHE CAN YET SERVE FOR US...
WE MUST SUMMON *THE BROTHER-HOOD.*
AND LET'S ATTIRE OUR GUEST OF HONOR IN SOMETHING MORE... *FITTING* TO THE OCCASION!


Overwhelming...
Drowning.
Destroying everything,
.. is the sound of the gun.
BANG
BANG
Twice.
Twice, it barks its horrible, desperate din.
Louder than my father's valiant and final rebuke.
The second blast peals right over his gut-wrenching grunt of surprise.
Its echoes evaporate the tinkling of my mother's fallen pearls.
As the sound returns to my ears.
...I can hear her softly whimpering, gasping out her final breaths.
If only...
B-B-BRUCE.. ?


If only I knew how to save her...
JULIMBEE!


I HARDLY FIND A SINGLE DAY TO BE A SUFFICIENT REST PERIOD, SIR. YOUR WOUNDS...
ARE OF THE FLESH, ALFRED. I'LL SUFFER THROUGH THEM.
BUT THAT'S NOTHING COMPARED TO WHAT I'LL ENDURE IF JULIE FALLS FINAL PREY TO THE MONK!
NO MATTER WHAT LIVES IN OR HAUNTS THE RALLSTONE CASTLE, I'VE GOT TO STOP IT! I JUST PRAY I'M NOT ALREADY TOO LATE.
sigh
VERY WELL, THEN

HERE. THESE SHOULD HELP HOLD YOU TOGETHER, AT LEAST FOR TONIGHT.
WHAT ARE THEY?
ONE'S AN ADVANCED COAGULANT, IT SHOULD HELP KEEP YOU FROM BLEEDING--TOO MUCH. THE OTHERS ARE TO DULL THE PAIN AND MAKE SURE YOU STAY ALERT.
THANKS, ALFRED

IF YOU DON'T HEAR BACK FROM ME TONIGHT, CALL IN A REPORT TO THE POLICE--CAPTAIN JAMES GORDON. HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.
AND... AND TELL JULIE--
YES, S.R. I UNDERSTAND ..
AND GODSPEED, MASTER BRUCE.
VVVROOOOOM
TONIGHT!
THIS VERY HOUR, O BRETHREN, THE ENDLESS NIGHT SHALL COMMENCE!

LONG HAVE I PROMISED YOUR RANKS THE ECSTASY OF NOCTURNA'S GIFTS!
AND, LONG HAVE YOU TITHED YOUR SUPPORT IN HONOR OF THIS BROTHERHOOD'S DESTINY!
YOUR PATIENCE IS ABOUT TO MEET ITS REWARDS, MY BROTHERS! AT LAST, THE NIGHT STANDS READY TO RECEIVE YOU!
WE HEAR YOUR WORDS, OH, DEATHLESS DUKE...
WE HEED YOUR WISDOM, OH, MERCILESS LORD!
The castle's upper windows are ablaze with torchlight. The courtyard is filled with vehicles.
TONIGHT, YE OF THE BLOOD FAITH...WE HAVE ACHIEVED AUTONOMY, FREEDOM FROM THE WICKED, WAKING WORLD!
AND SO, TONIGHT...

Julie's car is one of them!
FINALLY... TONIGHT, YOU ALL SHALL TASTE THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY!!
TO BE CONCLUDED!

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HI DAN DIDIO HERE, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF THE DC UNIVERSE AND YOUR FREQUENT HOST OF THIS DC NATION PAGE. I'M HERE WITH OUR GANG OF CRAZED BUT CREATIVE EDITORS CELEBRATING OUR WAY FROM CHRISTMAS TO NEW YEAR WITH A BIG BLOWOUT BASH. THIS IS THEIR FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR, A TIME WHEN THEY CAN SHARE A LAUGH AND A HOLIDAY DRINK INSTEAD OF WORRYING ABOUT THINGS LIKE BART ALLEN'S FIRST MEETING WITH THE ROGUES, TEMPEST'S DRAMATIC RETURN TO THE DCU, OR THE START OF WORLD WAR 3.
AS FOR ME, I'D LIKE TO TAKE THIS MOMENT TO RAISE MY GLASS AND TOAST YOU, THE GREATEST COMICS FANS AROUND.
SO FROM ALL OF US IN DC EDITORIAL TO ALL OF YOU IN THE DC NATION, WE WANT TO WISH YOU THE MERRIEST OF HOLIDAYS AND THE HAPPIEST OF NEW YEARS.
THANKS FOR JOINING US. I HOPE YOU PLAN TO STAY AROUND; THE BEST IS YET TO COME.
PEACE.

ART BY PHIL JIMENEZ
COLORS BY MARK CHIARELLO

DC NATION

For a complete list of this week's titles, sneak peeks, breaking news and more, visit us at dccomics.com

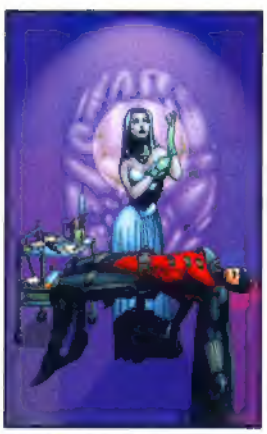
Next in...

BATMAN & THE MAD MONK #6

Batman vs. the Mad Monk! The Dark Knight faces his first supernatural foe in the frightful finale.

THE HOT LIST THIS WEEK

JUSTICE #9



JSA: CLASSIFIED #20

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #25

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